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Jihad

Jihad means struggle. Any sincere effort for the cause of religion will be called Jihad. Man's self leads him to evil. So waging war with the self is jihad. Sometimes friends or acquaintances pressurize you into engaging in activities which are not right from the moral standpoint. At that time, refusing to yield such pressure and sticking firmly to an upright attitude are forms of jihad.

Exhorting people to goodness and making them refrain from indecency are tasks entailing a great struggle. Continuing the dawah campaign whilst bearing all hardship is also jihad.

If having been treated with bitterness by neighbours or acquaintances, or after suffering any other kind of provocation, one refrains from reaction and retaliation and maintains pleasant relations unilaterally, this will also be a form of jihad.

There is another kind of jihad which is called 'qital' that is, engaging in war at God's behest at the time of aggression on the part of the enemies. This jihad is purely in self-defence in order to counter aggression. The literal meaning of jihad is not war. But to fight in self-defence in accordance with God's commandments also involves a struggle; that is why it is also called jihad.

Jihad, meaning war, is however a temporary and circumstantial matter. If in the real sense any need for defence arises only then will armed jihad be launched. If no such severe urgency arises, no armed jihad will take place.

Just calling an action 'jihad' will not morally validate it. The only true jihad is that which is carried out in accordance with Islam. Islamic jihad is, in actual fact, another name for peaceful struggle. This peaceful struggle is sometimes an inward-looking thing, like waging jihad with the self when it takes place at the level of feeling; sometimes it is desired externally, and manifests itself at the physical level through gestures (like kneeling, prostrating oneself before God).

Patience (Sabr)

Patience is the exercise of restraint in trying situations. It is a virtue which enables the individual to proceed towards worthy goals, undeflected by adverse circumstances or repeated provocations. If he allows himself to become upset by opposition, taunts or other kinds of unpleasantness, he will never reach his goals. He will simply become enmeshed in irrelevancies.

The only way to deal with the irksome side of daily living is to exercise patience. Patience will ensure that whenever one has some bitter experience, he will opt for the way of tolerance rather than that of reaction to provocation. It will enable one to absorb shocks and to continue, undeterred, on one's onward journey.

Patience, as well as being a practical solution to the problems faced in the outside world, is also a means of positive character building. One who is failing to exercise patience, gives free rein to negative thoughts and feelings develops a personality which is likewise negative while one who remains patient is so morally bolstered by his own positive thoughts and feelings that he develops a positive personality.

Sabr is no retreat. *Sabr* only amounts to taking the initiative along the path of wisdom and reason as opposed to the path of the emotions. *Sabr* gives one the strength to restrain one's emotions in delicate situations and rather to use one's brains to find a course of action along result-oriented lines.

The present world is fashioned in such a way that everyone is necessarily confronted with unpleasant matters at one time or another. Things which are unbearable have somehow to be borne; harrowing events have to be witnessed and all kinds of pain have to be suffered. In such situations, succumbing to impatience leads to the kind of unnecessary emotional involvement which is counter-productive, while a demonstration of patience has a healing, beneficial effect, allowing one to tread the path of discreet avoidance. Success in the present world is destined only for those who adopt the path of patience in adverse circumstances.

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WHAT THOSE WHO SIT WITH LEADERS SHOULD BE LIKE

Abdullah ibn Abbas tells of how his father once said to him: "My boy, I see how the Commander of the Faithful, Umar ibn al-Khattab, invites you to his meetings and takes you into his confidence. He also turns to you as well as to the other Companions for advice. I am going to give you three pieces of advice which are worth remembering: firstly, fear God, and never let it be said of you by Umar that you told a lie; secondly, keep his secrets well, and thirdly, never speak ill of anyone in his presence." Amir says that each one of those pieces of advice was better than a thousand. "Better than ten thousand," rejoined Abbas.

(Al-Tabarani)

The Brotherhood of Man

According to Islam, all human beings have been created by one and the same God, and for this reason belong to one great brotherhood. So far as their earthly origin is concerned, they are all descendants of the first pair of human beings ever created by God – Adam and Eve. In their subsequent spread over different parts of the world, variations in geographical conditions produced a diversity of skin colourings, languages and other racial characteristics.

The teaching of Islam in this regard is that despite differences of colour, language, etc., people should harbour no ill-will towards those who are apparently unlike themselves, for differentiating between one man and another is not approved by God. They should rather promote fellow feeling towards others, even if at first glance they appear like total strangers to them. Bearing in mind that they are all traceable back to Adam and Eve, they should be each other's well-wishers and willingly come to one another's assistance, like members of the same large family.

Ideally, the relation between one man and another ought not to be one of strangeness but one of familiarity; not of distance but of nearness; not of hatred but of love.

When all human beings are descendants of the same progenitors, that means that all are equal: no one is superior or inferior. The distinction between great and small is not between one human being and another, but between God and man. And before God, certainly, all human beings are equal; all are equally His creatures and His servants. For God does not discriminate between one or the other of His creations.

On the Occasion of Differences

Differences are a part of life. A divergence of views and behaviour arises between people for a variety of reasons. Just as differences occur among unbelievers and apostates similarly differences occur between sincere and pious people. But even if differences cannot be prevented, that is no reason, for any individual to indulge in negative behaviour. It should be borne in mind that despite differences, positive behaviour is both a possibility and a necessity.

Regarding a person as being wrong about everything just because he holds different opinions and calling him a hypocrite, bad intentioned and insincere are entirely un-Islamic reactions. The true believer looks at the issue of difference as a matter of intentions, and limits any ensuing dissension to the sphere of its origin. He never allows matters to escalate.

Severing relationships due to differences is not in accordance with the spirit of Islam. Mutual relationships should be maintained while continuing serious discussion of contentious issues. Not greeting the person with whom one has differences or refusing to meet such a person is highly improper.

In this present world everything is designed to put man to the test. Differences also serve this purpose. Man ought to be extremely cautious, particularly at moments of contention. He should continuously strive to be tolerant lest he show some improper reaction, which would be displeasing to God.

Remaining impartial in the face of differences is indeed a difficult task. But its reward too is great. Every right act is treated as an act of worship in Islam; it is therefore an act of superior worship when, in spite of controversies one keeps one's heart free of enmity and vengefulness and adheres strictly to the path of justice.

The emergence of difference is not in itself a bad thing. What is bad is that at the time of differences arising the individuals concerned do not rise to the occasion. They fail miserably in the divine test. Remaining within the confines of *taqwa* (fear of God) at times of conflict is a great Islamic act, and crossing the boundaries at such moments is an un-Islamic act of the worst degree.

Human Equality

According to Islamic tenets, all human beings are equal. In prayer, all members of the congregation stand in the same rows together, and on the Hajj pilgrimage, all the believers belonging to different countries don identical white seamless robes for the performance of the obligatory rites. On the occasion of the Final Pilgrimage, it is noteworthy that the Prophet of Islam declared that no Arab was superior to a non-Arab and that no white was superior to a black. All were equally servants of God. In Islamic society, everyone is accorded the same status, there being, ideally, no higher or lower social strata.

How then can we rationalise what are apparently very great differences in human beings in terms of colour and race, etc., considering that the concept of human equality ranks so high in the value system of Islam? We find the answer in the Qur'an, which makes it clear that such outward differences are meant to serve as means of identification and were never intended as indicators of superiority (or inferiority). People in different parts of the world may have a diversity of skin colourings and other distinctive racial characteristics, but that is only so that they may be easily distinguished from each other. By Islamic standards, this is designed to facilitate social and national interaction.

The sole basis of superiority in Islam is *taqwa* – the earnestness with which one leads a God-fearing life; as such, it bears no relation to colour or race. Physical attributes certainly have their effect on the social interaction of this world, but in the Hereafter, no value is attached to them. There, the only things which count are inner qualities, for upon them depends the essential excellence of man's distinctive character. That is why, according to a hadith, God sees the heart and not the body. He reserves a place in Paradise only for those found deserving in terms of their inner worth.

According to Islam, all greatness belongs to God. God as the Supreme Being is ineffably superior to all men. While there is this infinitely great difference between God and man, there is no difference whatsoever between man and man.

Abdullah Ibn Masud asked the Prophet what action was best. "Praying at the proper time," he replied. "What comes next, Messenger of God?" "Not saying things which hurt others," the Prophet said.

Concerning Zakat

Zakat, or the alms-tax, is one of the five basic tenets of Islam. Its payment is obligatory, at the rate of 2.5%, on all wealth that is subject to growth: Eight categories of people, eligible to receive Zakat, have been specified in this verse of the Qur'an:

Alms shall be used only for the advancement of God's cause, for the ransom of captives and debtors, and for distribution among the poor, the destitute, wayfarers, those that are employed in collecting alms, and those that are converted to the faith. That is a duty enjoined by God. He is Wise and All-knowing. (9:60)

So, as is clear from this verse, one of the ways that Zakat can be spent is "for the cause of God." Though the words of the Qur'an are general, the consensus of Muslim theologians is that they refer to holy war: it is those who are voluntarily engaged in holy war, and have not been appointed any salary by the government, who should receive alms given "for the cause of God." (*Fiqh-us-Sunnah*, Vol. I, p. 393)

If we accept this interpretation, then it means that the instruction to give Zakat "for the cause of God" may, to all intents and purposes, be misapplied. This form of voluntary participation in wars was only possible in ancient times; under modern conditions there is no question of it. In the present age war has become so complicated and technical that only those who have received regular training are able to take any real part in it: to allow untrained people to enter the field of battle is tantamount to inviting defeat. In other words, only those who are employed by the government can participate in war now a days. According to this interpretation, the above injunction is really no longer applicable.

The words "for the cause of God" are general in their application. They include any task that is performed for God's cause, being especially applicable to that work which the Qur'an calls "calling to the service of God." The true objective of Islam is preaching, not fighting. Calling people to submit themselves to God is the Islamic point of departure; war is only resorted to when the other party starts hostilities, and forces the preachers of Islam to take up arms to defend themselves.

The Egyptian scholar, Rashid Raza, has noted in his commentary of the Qur'an that the words "for the cause of God" are equally applicable to those who strive to spread the word of God.

The best way to give alms "for the cause of God" in the present age, is to contribute to the training of preachers, and to their dispatch by Islamic organizations to non-Muslim lands, and to continue to give financial support to these preachers, just as non-Muslims do for the propagation of their religion.

(*Tafseer Manar*)

QUALITIES OF LEADERSHIP

In the context of his relationship with the Caliph Umar, Abdullah ibn Abbas says that he served him better even than the members of his own household, and that he used to seat me next to him and showed me great respect.” He relates how one day when he was alone with him in his home, he suddenly heaved such a deep sigh that it was as if he was about to surrender his soul. Abdullah enquired. “Is it because of some apprehension that you heave this sigh?” “It is, indeed,” he replied, and asking Abdullah to come nearer, he told him that he did not know of anyone capable of taking on ‘this work’ – by which he meant the Caliphate. Abdullah ibn Abbas then mentioned six names, and asked the Caliph if he did not know them. Umar commented on each one of them in turn and then said: “One who is firm but not overbearing, soft but not weak, generous but not extravagant, thrifty but not miserly – only such a person is fit for this task.” According to Abdullah ibn Abbas, only Umar ibn al-Khattab himself possessed all these qualities.

(Kanz al-Ummal)

Salvation

What is the greatest issue facing man in this world? It is how to secure salvation in the life after death so that he may find his true abode and have a share in God's eternal blessings.

Every man who is born in this present world has to enter another world after death. In this world man was granted life's opportunities as a matter of being tested by them. Whatever man receives in the next world will be purely on the basis of his deeds in this world. This means that in the world before death, man has been given a great number of things and opportunities, whether or not he deserved them. But after death, the criterion of receiving will only be a matter of his just deserts; nothing will be given to him to try him.

This means that those who are held to be deserving will be granted not out of God's blessings but more that they actually merited. But those who have done nothing to deserve God's blessings will have nothing whatsoever in store for them. They will be compelled to live in a state of utter deprivation.

This is man's greatest problem. To what should he give the greatest attention so that he may not be held undeserving in the life to come? Everyone has to himself exert to the utmost in the consciousness that in the next stage of his life he may by default be considered without merit. Then there would be no further scope for him to earn God's blessings, salvation would elude him completely.

The next world is the most perfect and eternal world. There, all kinds of pleasures and happiness have been stored up for mankind. It is that world which man should cherish most, and it should be the place to which he most earnestly aspires. But the time for action to secure a place in that blessing-filled world is not the world after death, but the world before death. The present world is the place for action, while the next world is the place for reaping the reward for one's deeds.

Salvation in the life Hereafter is only for those who prove themselves deserving of it.

Calling God

Dua (prayer) means a call. That is a servant of God invokes his Creator to express either his needs or his servitude to Him. This call in itself is a form of worship.

God is a living and permanent existence. He hears and sees and has the power to do as He desires and set the course of events in consonance with His will.

It is this firm conviction which gives rise to this urge within man to pray to God. When man receives inspiration from God, it comes to him naturally to call upon God for all his needs and to ask for God's blessings in this world as well as in the Hereafter. God is truly man's sustainer.

There is no time set for prayer, neither is there any prescribed method nor a separate language. Man, at any moment, in any form, and in any language can pray to God. If the prayer has come right from inside one's heart, it will certainly reach God. God will hear the call without delay and will answer the suppliant's prayers.

There are certain prayers which are repeated in different forms of worship. But most prayers are not linked to one form of worship or another. For instance, when a man goes to sleep at night some words of prayer come to his lips according to the time. Similarly, when he wakes up, he starts praying to God to help him to make a better start to the coming day. In the same way when he meets someone, or eats and drinks, or takes his seat in a conveyance or is travelling, or is engaged in his economic activities – whatever the occasion – such prayers come to his lips as mean, O God, in this matter you will decide what is best for us.

Dua means seeking from God and this seeking from God has no ending. It continues always. Dua is an expression of unceasing feelings welling up inside the believer's heart for his Lord. No moment of a believer's life can be bereft of it.

Rituals in Islam

All religions, by dint of ritual and ceremony, give a definite form to these acts of worship. Islam likewise has its specific rites, but lays special emphasis on the spirit in which these are carried out. Moreover, it does not conceive of divine worship as a dichotomous proposition, divided into two equal parts under the headings of form and spirit. Form, in one sense, is only an external manifestation of the spirit. That is to say that spirit dominates in being the vital and indispensable element of every sincere religious act – to which form is a mere ancillary.

A *hadith* pertaining to fasting shows how this act must be illumined by spirit: “One who did not forsake telling lies while on a fast, God has no need of such a person forsaking food and water.” Numerous statements of this kind, enshrined in the Qur’an and Hadith make it clear that, in Islam, ritual practices and spirit are not equal constituents of worship. As elements of religion, they stand in relation to each other as the crucial and the subordinate. Each religious act of worship may, or may not – depending upon its nature and circumstances – have an external form. But whatever the case, ritualized or formless, what is of overarching importance is the zeal which inspires it.

While, from the Islamic standpoint, rituals serve partly as palpable identifiers of religious acts or of worship, and partly as physical reinforcements of or prompters to religious ardour, the essence of Islam is its inner spirit. This is something eternal and unassailable, unlike its outer forms which have no lasting significance in being purely external signals of the spiritual inner core. Whenever this reality becomes lodged in the innermost recesses of the individual psyche, its effects are outwardly reflected. Ceremonial acts, sincerely performed are but the material expressions of the incontrovertible inner truth.

When, towards the end of his life, the Prophet Muhammad went on his pilgrimage, he laid down specific ways of performing Hajj. More than one lakh of his Companions went along with him on this occasion. Subsequently, the Prophet seated himself in the courtyard of the Kabah, where his Companions came with their queries about the procedures to be followed in this very important part of Islamic worship. Most of these questions concerned the rites and their forms. One would say that he had carried out such and such a rite beforehand, while another would say that he had done so at a later stage, thus reversing the order of the proceedings. (Hajj involves the performance of a series of rites, and since this was the first proper Hajj, there was some uncertainty about their correct order.) The Prophet allayed their fears by saying: “There is no harm. There is no harm. Real harm lies in the dishonouring of a person.” This saying of the Prophet throws light on how form relates to spirit in Islam. That is, the spirit is the essential factor, while the form, or ritual, is purely a matter of externals. If the believer is in no way found to be lacking in spirit, any deficiency in the form of his worship will be considered tolerable.

The converse of this is illustrated by a tradition set down in the books of Hadith. Once the Prophet of Islam was seated in the mosque in Medina, when a Muslim worshipper came to meet him after duly performing his ablutions and saying his prayers with full observance of their ritual. The Prophet sent him back to say his prayers again, as he said that *he had not said his prayers*.

Here, a clear distinction had been made between form and spirit. In his divine wisdom, the Prophet sensed that this worshipper's performance of the rituals of prayer had been empty and mechanical, and in no sense imbued with any religious fervour. Indeed, the true spirit of *namaz* is modesty. But this individual's behaviour showed that while he was praying modesty was very far from his mind. And if the Prophet told him to go back and say his prayers, it was so that he should concern himself with the inner kernel of prayer and not its outer shell. However punctilious worship may appear in its form, if the true spirit is absent, the performance of the ritual must be held invalid. The mere observance of form does not make worship acceptable in the eyes of God.

The word 'ritual', in fact, has the same connotation as 'form'. The only difference is that 'form' is a term of general application, whereas 'ritual' in respect of its usage, has in the main become a religious term.

There is a *hadith* which tells us that the value of an action depends upon the intention of the doer. That is, a practice must be evaluated on the basis of its motivation, for example, the Prophet's migration from Mecca to Medina, which in Islamic history is called the Hijrah. This emigration for the sake of Islam was an act of great religious significance. It meant people abandoning their hearths and homes for the sake of God. However, one of these emigrants was not so pure in intention. He had left Mecca for Medina with the ulterior motive of marrying a Medinan resident who had agreed to marry him only if he came to Medina, as she could not come to Mecca. This was his true reason for coming to Medina along with the other emigrants. The Prophet told his companions that since that individual had migrated, not for the sake of God, but for his own private benefit, he would not be rewarded for having migrated.

This makes it clear that rituals are of relative value in Islam. The true value of an act in Islam depends entirely upon the spirit in which it is carried out, and not upon the trappings of outward form.

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THE MOST WORTHWHILE WORK IS PREACHING THE WORD OF GOD

The Prophet said: "That God should grant guidance, through you, to just one person is better for you than everything on which the sun rises."

Simplicity

A believer is one who finds God. God's discoverer starts living by nature on the plane of higher realities. He rises above outward, superficial things and finds sources of interest in the world of piety. Such a person by his very nature becomes a simplicity loving person. His motto is: Simple living and high thinking.

One who has acquired the taste for the meaning of the divine reality can have no taste for outward and material things. Such a person relishes simplicity. In his eyes pretensions lose their attraction. His soul finds peace in natural things. Unnatural and artificial things appear to him as if they are causing his inner world disintegrate and creating obstacles to the progress of his spiritual journey.

Simplicity is a support to the believer. It contributes to his strength. By opting for simplicity he is able to put his time to the best use by not wasting it on irrelevant matters. He does not let his attention be diverted to things which are inessential so far as his goal is concerned. And in this way he is able to devote himself whole-heartedly to the achievement of higher goals.

Simplicity is the food of the believer, and, having its own internal beauty, it serves as an apparel for his modesty. It is in an atmosphere of simplicity that his personality finds the scope for its growth. On the contrary, if the believer builds up an artificial glamour around himself, he will eventually feel as if he is imprisoned in a cell.

A believer considers himself God's servant in the ultimate sense of the word. His thoughts and feelings are all perfectly attuned to this servitude, to this condition of being God's servant. One who consistently thinks in this way inevitably finds his whole disposition veering towards simplicity. Since ostentation, artificiality and social pretensions are at variance with his disposition, he resolutely avoids them throughout his life, in his manner of living and in his daily dealings.

Qur'an: The Book of God-II

Historical Inaccuracy

In the 20th century B.C., during the time of the Prophet Joseph, the Children of Israel entered Egypt. Seven centuries later they left Egypt along with Moses, crossing over into the Sinai peninsula. These events are mentioned in both the Bible, and the Qur'an. But, while the account in the Qur'an is entirely consistent with external history, the Bible relates several incidents which do not correspond to historical records. This has created problems for believers in the Bible. Should they accept what is written in the Bible, or should they go by history? Since the two contradict one another, they cannot accept both at the same time.

On January 12, 1985, a gathering was held in the Indian Institute of Islamic Studies at Tughlaqabad in New Delhi, which was addressed by Ezra Kolet, president of the Council of Indian Jewry. His topic was: 'What is Judaism?' Naturally, he dealt with Jewish history in his talk, mentioning, among other things, the Jew's entrance into Egypt and their exodus from that country. The names of both Joseph and Moses figured in his talk as well as the kings who were ruling in Egypt in their respective times. For both kings, the contemporaries of Joseph and Moses, he used the term 'Pharaoh.'

As everyone acquainted with the period knows, this nomenclature is historically incorrect. The reign of the kings known as Pharaohs only began in Moses' time: in Joseph's day, a different line of monarchs ruled in Egypt.

When Joseph entered Egypt, the kings of a dynasty known as the Hyksos ruled there. They were ethnically Arabs, and had usurped the Egyptian throne, ruling in that country from 2000 B.C. until the end of the 15th century B.C.. The indigenous population then rebelled against foreign rule and the Hyksos dynasty came to an end.

Home rule was then established in Egypt. The clan that took over sovereignty chose for itself the name of Pharaoh, which literally means son of the sun-god, for in those days Egyptians worshipped the sun, and in order to vindicate their right to rule over the Egyptians, they made themselves out to be incarnations of the sun-god.

In effect, Mr. Kolet was calling the Hyksos Kings, Pharaohs. He had no choice but to do so, for that is what they are called in the Bible, with reference to both Joseph's and Moses' respective periods. The Jewish speaker could either accept the Bible or history, but not both simultaneously. Since he was speaking in his capacity as president of the Jewish Council, he put history aside and based his talk on biblical accounts.

But in the Qur'an we do not find accounts which clash with history in this way, and those who follow the Qur'an are not compelled to forsake history in order to uphold their Holy Book. When the Qur'an was revealed, people had no knowledge of ancient Egyptian history. Only in later years did archeological excavations make it possible for Egyptologists to compile a record of the history of that country's ancient kings.

Yet despite this, we hear mention in the Qur'an of the Egyptian monarch who was a contemporary of Joseph. For him, the Qur'an uses the title 'King of Egypt.' As for the king who ruled in Moses' day, the Qur'an repeatedly calls him Pharaoh. We thus have a Qur'anic account that corresponds exactly with historical facts, unlike the biblical account which is historically inaccurate. This shows that the Qur'an is written by One who has direct recourse to true facts, without dependence on human sources of knowledge.

Example from History

According to the theory of evolution both man and animals belong to a common ancestor. That is, a species of animals through gradual stages of evolution developed into chimpanzee which further evolved into human beings.

Even if we take for granted the theory of evolution the question arises as to where are the middle, missing links between these evolutionary stages between animal and man. Where were the species still in the process of evolution bearing both animal and human features. Though no such real middle link has yet been discovered, evolutionists believe that those species did exist which have yet to be discovered. These imaginary links are wrongly termed 'missing links.'

In 1912, the English newspapers trumpeted the news that a fragment of an ancient skull, half ape and half man, dating back to some nebulous pre-historic period, had been found at Piltdown, thus providing material evidence which confirmed Darwin's theory of evolution.

This Piltdown man achieved instant popularity. The name appeared in standard text-books such as R.S. Lull's *Organic Evolution*. Leading intellectuals counted the discovery among the great triumphs of modern man. In authoritative works such as H. G . Wells' *Outline of History* and Bertrand Russell's *History of Western Philosophy*, it was mentioned as though there was no doubt about the Piltdown Man's existence.

For nearly half a century scholars remained enthralled with this "great discovery". It was only in 1953 that some scientists became doubtful. They extracted the Piltdown man from its iron fire-proof box in the British Museum and subjected it to detailed modern scientific analysis, studying it from every relevant angle. Their final conclusion was that the Piltdown Man was a forgery. The great acclaim it had received was totally unfounded. What had actually happened was that someone, who wished to discredit a rival by playing a trick on him, had taken the jaw of a chimpanzee and dyed it to make it look ancient and had then filed its teeth to make them look human. He then submitted his "find" to the British

Museum, saying that he had come across it in Piltdown, England. He intended at a later stage to reveal the whole affair as a hoax, in order to make his rival look foolish, but when he saw the seriousness with which his trick had been taken by the entire body of western scientists, he was afraid to own up, and his silence then prevented positive thinking on evolution for several decades. (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 1984, Piltdown Man.)

The Mummy of Merneptah

One of the most intriguing predictions made by the Qur'an concerns a Pharaoh of Egypt, called Merneptah, who was the son of Rameses II. According to historical records, this king was drowned in pursuit of Moses in the Red Sea. When the Qur'an was revealed, the only other mention of Pharaoh was in the Bible, the sole reference to his having drowned being in the book of Exodus; 'And the waters returned, and covered the Chariots, and the horsemen, and all the host of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them; there remained not so much as one of them. '

Amazingly, when this was all the world knew about the drowning of Pharaoh, the Qur'an produced this astounding revelation: 'We shall save you in your body this day, so that you may become a sign to all posterity.

How extraordinary this verse must have appeared when it was revealed. At that time no one knew that the Pharaoh's body was really intact, and it was nearly 1400 hundred years before this fact came to light. It was a Professor Loret who, in 1898, was the first person to find the mummified remains of the Pharaoh who lived in Moses' day. For 3000 years the corpse had remained wrapped in a sheet in the Tomb of the Necropolis at Thebes where Loret had found it, until July 8, 1907, when Elliot Smith uncovered it and subjected it to proper scientific examination. In 1912 he published a book entitled *The Royal Mummies*. His research had proved that the mummy discovered by Loret was indeed that of the Pharaoh who knew Moses, resisted his pleas, pursued him as he took flight, lost his life in the process. His earthly remain were saved by the will of God from destruction to become a sign to man, as is written in the Qur'an.

In 1975, Dr. Bucaille, made a detailed examination of the Pharaoh's mummy which by then had been taken to Cairo. His findings led him to write in astonishment and acclaim:

Those who seek among modern data for proof of the Holy Scriptures will find a magnificent illustration of the verses of the Qur'an dealing with the, Pharaoh's body by visiting the Royal Mummies Room of the Egyptian Museum, Cairo!

As early as the seventh century A.D, the Qur'an had asserted that the Pharaoh's body was preserved as a sign for man, but it was only in the 19th century that the body's discovery gave concrete proof of this prediction. What further proofs is needed that the Qur'an is the Book of God? Certainly, there is no book like it, among the works of men.

Examples from Astronomy

Referring to sun and moon, the Qur'an tells us that all these heavenly bodies are floating in their own sphere/rounded courses (*falak*) (36:40). Dr Maurice Bucaille has discussed these verses in detail that *falak* here means what is called 'orbit' in science. While floating is the most appropriate term to describe the movement of celestial bodies in a vast and subtle space.

Dr. Maurice Bucaille further writes:

It is shown that the sun moves in an orbit, but no indication is given as to what this orbit might be in relation to the Earth. At the time of the Qur'anic Revelation, it was thought that the Sun moved while the Earth stood still. This was the system of geocentrism that had held away since the time of Ptolemy, second century B.C .. , and was to continue to do so until Copernicus in the sixteenth century a.d. Although people supported this concept at the time of Muhammad, it does not appear anywhere in the Qur'an, either here or elsewhere (p. 159).

Development of Biology

An interesting example in this connection is one published in the newspapers towards the end of 1984. The Canadian newspaper, *The Citizen* (22 November, 1984) published this news under the heading:

Ancient Holy Book 1300 Years Ahead of its Time.

Similarly *The Times of India*, New Delhi (10 December, 1984) published this news under this headline:

Koran Scores Over Modern Science.

Dr. Keith More, a famous embryologist and professor at Toronto University, Canada, has studied some verses from the Qur'an (23:14, 39:6), making a comparative study of the Qur'anic verses with modern research. In this connection he also visited the King Abdul Aziz University in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, several times, along with his colleagues. He found that the statements of the Qur'an, astonishingly corresponded in full with modern discoveries. He was very surprised that facts contained in the Qur'an were brought to light by the Western World as late as 1940. In a paper written in this connection, he says: "The 1300 years old Koran contains passages so accurately about embryonic development that Muslims can reasonably believe them to be revelations from God."

Convincing supportive details can be had from the analysis Maurice Bucaille makes in his book. *The Bible, the Qur'an and Science* which was published in 1970. We reproduce here some excerpts from the chapter entitled 'Human Reproduction.'

Evolution of the Embryo inside the Uterus

The Qur'anic description of certain stages in the development of the embryo corresponds exactly to what we today know about it, and the Qur'an does not contain a single statement that is open to criticism from modern science.

After 'the thing which clings' (an expression which is well founded, as we have seen) the Qur'an informs us that the embryo passes through the stage of 'chewed flesh,' then osseous tissue appears and is clad in flesh (defined by a different word from the preceding which signifies 'intact flesh').

– Surah 23, verse 14:

“We fashioned the thing which clings into a chewed lump of flesh and We fashioned the chewed flesh into bones and We clothed the bones with intact flesh.”

'Chewed flesh' is the translation of the word *mudgha*; 'intact flesh' is *lahm*. This distinction needs to be stressed. The embryo is initially a small mass. At a certain stage in its development, it looks to the naked eye like chewed flesh. The bone structure develops inside this mass in what is called the mesenchyma. The bones that are formed are covered in muscle; the word *lahm* applies to them.

It is known how certain parts appear to be completely out of proportion during embryonic development with what is later to become the individual, while others remain in proportion.

This is surely the meaning of the word *mukhallaq* which', signifies 'shaped in proportion' as used in verse 5, surah 22 to describe this phenomenon.

“We fashioned...into something which clings....into a lump of flesh fashioned and unfashioned.”

More than a thousand years before our time, at a period when whimsical doctrines still prevailed, man had a knowledge of the Qur'an. The statements it contains express in simple terms truths of primordial importance which man has taken centuries to discover.

ORIGIN OF THE UNIVERSE

The Qur'an says:

“Do not the disbelievers see that the heavens and the earth were one solid mass which we tore asunder...” (21: 30)

Ratq means wholesomeness, compactness while *fatq* is the opposite of it, that is, disintegration.

The modern studies in astronomy have confirmed the truth of this concept, various observations having led scientists to postulate that the universe was formed by an explosion from a state of high density and temperature (the '*big-bang*' theory) and that the cosmos evolved from the original, highly compressed, extremely hot gas, taking the form of galaxies of stars, cosmic dust, meteorites and asteroids. The present outward motion of the galaxies is a result of this explosion. According to the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (1984), this is 'the theory now favoured by most cosmologists.' Once the process of

expansion had set in – about six billions years ago – it had to continue, because the more the celestial bodies moved away from the centre, the less attraction they exerted over one another. Estimates of the circumference of the original matter place it at about one thousand million light years and now, according to Professor Eddington's calculations, the present circumference is ten times what it was originally. This process of expansion is still going on. Professor Eddington explains that the stars and galaxies are like marks on the surface of a balloon which is continuously expanding, and that all the celestial spheres are getting further and further apart. Ancient man supposed quite wrongly, that the stars were as close to one another as they appeared to be. How significant that the Qur'an should state in Surah 51, verse 47, 'The heaven, We have built it with power. Verily we are expanding it.' Now science has revealed that since the universe, came into existence 90 thousand million years B.C..., its circumference has stretched from 6 thousand to sixty thousand million light years. This means that there are inconceivably vast distances between the celestial bodies. And it has been discovered that they revolve as part of galactic systems, just as our earth and the planets revolve around the sun.

Just as within the Solar System, many planets and asteroids are situated at great distances from each other, yet revolve according to one system, likewise every material body is composed of innumerable 'Solar Systems' on an infinitesimally small scale. These systems are called atoms. While the vacuum of the Solar System is observable, the vacuum of the atomic system is too small to be visible. All things, however solid they appear, are hollow from the inside. For instance, if all the electrons and protons present within the atoms of a six foot tall man were to be squeezed in such a manner that no space were left, his body would be reduced to such a tiny spot as would be visible only through a microscope.

The farthest galaxy that has been observed is situated several million light years away from the sun. Yet it is held that if the total quantum of cosmic matter as worked out by astro-physicists – and it is enormous – were to be compressed so as to eliminate all space, the size of the universe would be only thirty times the size of the sun. In view of how recently these calculations have been made, it is quite extraordinary that 1500 years ago the Qur'an asserted that not only had the universe expanded from a condensed form but that its original quantum of matter had remained constant, so that it could conceivably be re-condensed into a relatively small space. It describes the end of the universe thus: "On that day, we shall roll up the heaven like a scroll of writing" (21:104).

The moon is our nearest neighbour in space, its distance from the earth being just two lakh and forty thousand miles. Due to this proximity, its gravitational force affects the sea waves, causing an extraordinary rise in the water level twice a day. At certain points these waves rise as high as sixty feet. The land surface too is affected by this lunar pull, but only in terms of a few inches. The present distance between the earth and moon is optimal from man's point of view, there being several advantages. If this distance were reduced, for example to only fifty thousand miles, the seas would be so stormy that a major part of the earth would be submerged in them and, moreover, the continual impact of the stormy waves would cut the mountains into pieces and the earth's surface, more fully exposed to the moon's gravitation would start to crack open.

Astronomers estimate that at the time the earth came into existence, the moon was close to it and the surface of the earth had, therefore, been exposed to all kinds of upheavals. In the course of time, the earth and the moon drew apart, to their present distance from one another, according to astronomical laws. Astronomers hold that this distance will be maintained for a billion years, then the same astronomical laws will bring the moon back closer to the earth. As a result of conflicting forces of attraction, the moon will 'burst when close enough and glorify our dead world with rings like those of Saturn.'

This concept bears out the Qur'an's prediction to a remarkable degree. The following lines, in addition to presenting this phenomenon as a physical fact, explain its religious significance:

The Hour of Doom is drawing near, and the moon is cleft in two. Yet, when they see a sign, the unbelievers turn their backs and say, 'Ingenious magic!'

The healing property of honey

The Qur'an tells us about the healing property of honey (16:69). In the light of this verse Muslims attached great importance to the medicinal aspect of honey, it became an important ingredient in their pharmacology. But the western world remained unaware of its medical value for centuries, they treated it as merely a liquid food-item. It was not before the twentieth century that the European physicians discovered the antiseptic properties of honey.

Here is a summary of modern researches on honey published in an American journal.

Honey is a powerful destroyer of germs which produce human diseases. It was not until the twentieth century, however, that this was demonstrated scientifically. Dr. W.G. Sackett, formerly with the Colorado Agricultural College at Fort Collins, attempted to prove that honey was a carrier of disease much like milk. To his surprise, all the disease germs he introduced into pure honey were quickly destroyed. The germ that causes typhoid fever died in pure honey after 48 hours' exposure. Enteritidis, causing intestinal inflammation, lived 48 hours. A hardy germ which causes broncho-pneumonia and septicemia held out for four days. *Bacillus coli Communis* which under certain conditions causes peritonitis, was dead on the fifth day of experiment. According to Dr. Bodog Beck, there are many other germs equally destructible in honey. The reason for this bactericidal quality in honey, he said, is in its hygroscopic ability. It literally draws every particle of moisture out of germs. Germs, like any other living organism, perish without water. This power to absorb moisture is almost unlimited. Honey will draw moisture from metal, glass, and even stone rocks (*Rosicrucian Digest*, September 1975 p. 11).

Superiority of the Qur'an

The very language in which it is written – Arabic – is a kind of miracle, being an astonishing exception to the historical rule that a language cannot survive in the same form for more than 500 years. In the course of five centuries, a language changes so radically that the coming generations find it increasingly difficult to understand the works of their distant predecessors. For instance, the works of Geoffrey

Chaucer (1342-1400), the father of English poetry, and the plays and poetry of William Shakespeare (1564-1616), one of the greatest writers of English language, have become almost unintelligible to twentieth century readers, and are now read almost exclusively as part of college curricula with the help of glossaries, dictionaries and 'translations.'

But the history of the Arabic language is strikingly different, having withstood the test of the time for no less than 1500 years. Wording and style have, of course, undergone some development, but not to such an extent that words should lose their original meaning. Supposing someone belonging to the Quranic times of ancient Arabia could be reborn today, the form of language in which he would express himself would be as understandable to modern Arabs as it was to his own contemporaries.

It is as if the Qur'an had placed a divine imprint upon Arabic, arresting it in its course so that it should remain understandable right up to the last day. This being so, the Qur'an is never just going to collect dust on some obscure 'Classical Literature' shelf, but will be read by, and give inspiration to people for all time to come.

In the field of science, despite the great and rapid advances in knowledge in recent years, we come back to what was asserted in the Qur'an, so many centuries ago, as having arrived at the quintessence of the matter. Just as the Arabic language seems to have been crystallised at a particular point in time – in fact, at the moment of divine revelation, so also does science seem to have been arrested in its course, the Qur'an having the final say on matters which for centuries lay beyond man's knowledge and which still, in many important cases, elude man's intellectual grasp. The most significant of these is the origin of the universe.

Natural Phenomena

The Qur'an was revealed at a time when little was known about nature. Rainfall, for example, was believed to come from a river in heaven which gushed down on to the earth. The earth was thought to be flat and the heavens a kind of vault resting on the hilltops which provided a roof over the earth. Stars were considered to be shining silver nails set in the vault of heavens, or thought of as tiny lamps which were swung to and fro at night by means of a rope. The ancient Indians held that the earth rested upon the horns of a cow and when the cow shifted the earth from one horn to the other, this caused earthquakes. Up till the time of Copernicus (1473-1543 a.d.) it was generally believed that the earth was stationary and that the sun revolved around it (Two thousand years earlier, Aristarchus of Samos had anticipated this theory, but his ideas did not gain ground).

With the advances made in the field of science and technology, the range of human observation and experiment were vastly increased, opening up great vistas of knowledge about the universe. In all spheres of existence and in all disciplines of science, previously established concepts were proved wrong by later research and were discarded. This means that no human work dating back 1500 years can boast of total accuracy, because all 'facts' must now be re-evaluated in the light of recent information. No such book has, in fact, been found to be totally free of errors, with the notable exception of the Qur'an,

whose authenticity has withstood all challenges over the centuries. This constitutes conclusive evidence of the Qur'an having had its source in an Omnipresent and Eternal Mind – one which knows all facts in their true forms and whose knowledge has not been conditioned by time and circumstances. Had it been a human fabrication it could not have withstood the test of time, human vision being, by contrast, narrow and limited.

The basic theme of the Qur'an is salvation in the life hereafter. That is why it does not fall into the category of any of the known arts and sciences of the world. But since it addresses itself to man, it touches on almost all the disciplines which concern him. In spite of the breadth of its scope, none of its statements has ever been shown to have been made on the basis of inadequate knowledge. Bertrand Russell, in his *Impact of Science on Society* makes the point that, renowned philosopher as he was, Aristotle, while 'proving' the inferiority of women to men, stated that 'women have fewer teeth than men,' thus revealing his ignorance of the fact that men and women have an equal number of teeth. No such ignorance or misconception is ever evinced in the Qur'an. This clearly shows that the origin of this work is a superior Being whose knowledge pre-dates time itself and goes infinitely far beyond present knowledge, no matter how advanced the latter may appear to be.

Newton's Theory of Light

Another point on which human intelligence appeared to have arrived at a major scientific truth was that of the true nature of light. It was Sir. Issac Newton (1642-1727) who put forward the theory that light consisted of minute corpuscles in rapid motion which emanated from their source and were scattered in the atmosphere. Owing to the extraordinary influence of Newton, this corpuscular theory held away in the scientific world for a very long time, only to be abandoned in the middle of the nineteenth century in favour of the wave theory of light. It was the discovery of the action of photon which delivered the final blow to Newton's theory. "Young's work convinced scientists that light has essential wave characteristics in apparent contradiction to Newton's corpuscular theory.

It had taken only 200 years to prove Newton wrong. The Qur'an, on the contrary, gave its message to the world in the 7th century, and even after a lapse of 1400 years its truth emerges unscathed. The reason for this is that it is of divine, not human origin: the absolute truth of its statements can be proved at all times – an extraordinary attribute that no other work can claim.

Einstein's theory of relativity declares that gravity controls the behaviour of planets, stars, galaxies and the universe itself, and does so in a predictable manner.

This scientific discovery had already been developed into a philosophy of Hume (1711-1776) and other thinkers, who declared that the whole system of the universe was governed by the principle of causation, and that it had only been when man had not been aware of this, that God had been supposed to control the universe. The principle of cause and effect was then thought logically to dispense with the idea of God.

But later research ran counter to this purely material supposition. When Paul Dirac, Heisenberg and other eminent scientists bent their minds to analysing the structure of the atom, they discovered that its system contradicted the principle of causation which had been adopted on the basis of studies made of the solar system. This theory, called the quantum mechanic theory, maintains that at the sub-atomic level, matter behaves randomly.

The word 'principle' in science means something which applies in equal measure throughout the entire universe. If there is even one single instance of a principle failing to apply to something, its academic bonafides have to be called in question. It followed then that if matter did not function according to this principle of causation in an exactly similar manner at subatomic level as it did in the solar system, it should have to be rejected.

Einstein found this idea unthinkable and spent the last 30 years of his life trying to reconcile these seeming contradiction of nature. He rejected the randomness of quantum mechanics saying, "I cannot believe God plays dice with the universe.' Despite his best efforts, he was never able to resolve this problem and it seems that the Qur'an has the final word on the reality of the universe. The fact that the universe cannot be explained in terms of human knowledge is aptly illustrated by Ian Roxburgh when he writes:

The laws of physics discovered on earth contain arbitrary numbers, like the ratio of the mass of an electron to the mass of a proton, which is roughly 1840 to one. Why? Did a Creator arbitrarily choose these numbers?

Through these words science seems to recognise the fact that the universe can never be encompassed by human knowledge. Universe is the manifestation of the will of the Almighty. Hence no explanation can be arrived at without the concept of the Will of God.

LIP SERVICE IS NOT PROOF OF REAL ATTACHMENT

Jubair ibn Nufair relates how, as his father was sitting with Miqdad ibn Aswad one day, a passerby, on seeing a Companion of the Prophet said: "How fortunate are those two eyes that have seen the Prophet! By God, if only we could have seen what you saw and shared in your experiences' Nufair said that he was impressed by the man's words; he seemed to have spoken well. But Miqdad – may God be pleased with him – looked towards the man and said: "No one whom God has saved from being present at those hours should desire to have been there. Who knows how they would have acted in those circumstances? By God, many of whom God cast into Hell came to see the Prophet, such as did not accept what he said, or believe in 'his mission'.